

Broken English

Marilyn Fontana

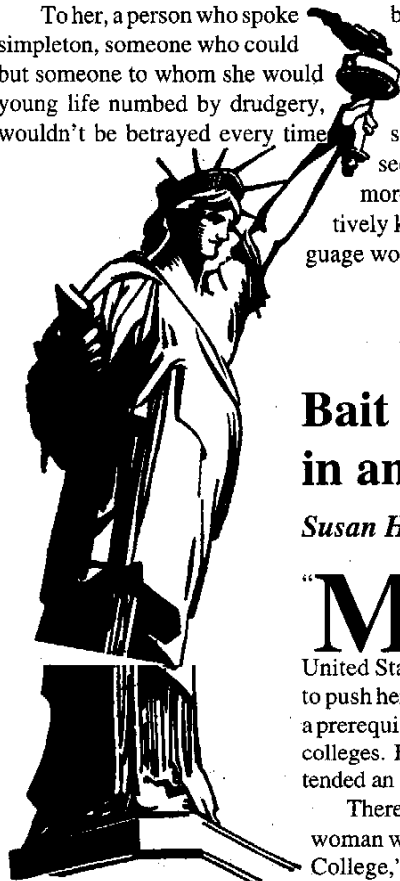
The young woman was explaining to me that a new GED student had enrolled for class. Drawing me closer to her, she nearly whispered, "She speaks broken English." I nodded and left the building. It had been years since I had heard that phrase, "broken English."

My grandmother, who was born in this country, spent her life among Italian immigrants who came from the same place as her parents. During the 20's, she fed and housed immigrant men who had come here alone to find work in the quarries. She always spoke of them with disdain when she'd tell her stories about those days. Her boarders, these newcomers from the "old country," ate her pies before dinner, drank too much of the grappa she sold by the glass, and teased her son, my father—the ultimate insult. Yes, she too had known hunger and the humiliation of having had only a few years of school, but she had no Italian accent. Her voice was not broken; her voice could hide her brokenness.

To her, a person who spoke simpleton, someone who could but someone to whom she would young life numbed by drudgery, wouldn't be betrayed every time

broken English was a child, a change his clothes and his address always feel superior. In spite of a worry, and fear of poverty, she she opened her mouth. She was secretly grateful that others were more broken than she, and she instinctively knew that what was broken in language would never be fixed. An immigrant

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Bait and Switch: Clashing Expectations in an ESL Program

Susan Henderson-Conlon

"Miwako," a recent Japanese junior college graduate, dreamed of studying hotel management in the United States. However, she had been unable to push her TOEFL score above the 500 mark, a prerequisite for admission to most American colleges. Before giving up her dream, she attended an international college fair in Tokyo.

There she met "Candy," a stylishly dressed woman with a broad smile from "Gold Coast College," a private college in New England.

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Candy told Miwako of the excellent hotel management program at Gold Coast, its beautiful oceanfront campus, and its relative proximity to Boston. She assured Miwako that the TOEFL was no obstacle as she could take ESL courses simultaneously with the hotel degree requirements.

Miwako applied and a month later received her acceptance letter from Gold Coast, signed personally by Candy, who added, "I

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MATSOL *Currents*

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From the President

As the incoming president of MATSOL, I look forward to serving you with enthusiasm and dedication. I am committed to maintaining and extending the services which we currently provide. I also hope to be supportive of our board of volunteers, who work so tirelessly to represent us and to enrich our educational opportunities. Lastly, I am honored to join the twenty-four previous presidents of MATSOL who have enhanced our professional growth and standing by their distinguished service.

This column provides me with the opportunity to share an update on the status of our organization and the community it serves.

Let's start with the good news: Our organization is healthy and growing. Last year, the board held two successful conferences and one Professional Development Opportunity ("PDO," a half-day focused workshop), which were well-attended and profitable. The other services we provide, such as *Currents* and the Job Bank, have become exemplars among TESOL affiliates.

Evaluations from the Winter/Spring Conference indicate that our move to a professional site was well received. Participants on Friday were particularly impressed by the "real" cups, and the publishers were delighted with the increased comfort and space. Unfortunately, the only time available at Lantana in 1998 is late winter, so next year's conference will be held on February 27 and 28. Of course, we now know that a date is no guarantor of good weather. One humorous note about the conference: Since the turn-around time between

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From the Editor

In your hands is my final *Currents* as editor. After two years, I turn our publication over to Tom Griffith, regular columnist and now Associate Editor, freeing myself to fill other roles, not the least of which will be father to twins in October. I wish Tom the best of luck and thank him and Doug Kohn for their editorial help, which has been much needed and greatly appreciated. They will continue to do a fine job.

I also would like to thank Josephine Vonarburg, former Recording Secretary, and Kellie Jones, Membership Secretary, for their cooperation and help in preparing a total of five thousand copies for mailing. In this regard Josephine has been particularly invaluable over the last two years.

It has also been my pleasure to work with the outgoing members of the MATSOL Board. Their selfless and supportive attitudes and actions go too often unthanked. May they be rewarded with riches of their own choosing. (Please note the new board members listed on the inside back cover.)

Finally, I thank my wife, Katherine, for her patience with me as I have robbed her of more time than I would like in order to read, write, attend meetings and conferences, photograph, and perform many other tasks and errands large and small.

One note about this issue. You will not see Joe Pettigrew's "ESL Outrages" column, for—could it be?—he had no grand outrage to report, though he no doubt soon will, which you will read about in the fall. However, I direct your attention to one of the cover articles, "Bait and Switch," which nicely fills the "Outrages" niche.

Although I am leaving my post as editor, I do plan to remain active in MATSOL and contribute as and when I can to MATSOL *Currents*. I sincerely hope you have enjoyed the issues I have sent forth, and I hope I have upheld the quality and tradition of the publication I received what at times seems like only a few months ago.

Ron Clark

MATSOL Winter/Spring 1997 Conference



Marjorie Soriano discusses using both Lennon's music and biography in Slovakia.



Linda Schulman, new MATSOL President; Janet Siegel, MATSOL Treasurer; and Betty Steinmuller, Higher Ed Rep (left to right).



Pat Ellis (left), Bentley, B.U., and Roxbury C.C., and Kellie Jones, MATSOL Membership Secretary.



Former colleagues catch up: Paul Abraham (left) and Carol Allen.



Welcome by Linda Schilman.



Pat Ellis, Jean Chandler, Rick Lizotte, Marianne Rowe, and Jane Tchaicha (left to right) on "Teaching to the Learner."



A nice end to a long day.



Showing off their video clips are Amelia Onorato (left) and Dorothy Lynde.



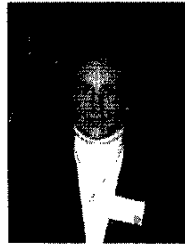
Ben Walker (left) and Joan Harrington (right) flank future teachers (from left) Priscilla Purvis, Erin Hannon, Stephanie Wong, Paula Di Camillo, and Lloyd Bryan in the Teach Boston program.

Photos by Ron Clark, Doug Kohn, and Esther Iwanaga.

Summary of Plenary Address: February 28, 1997

“Exploring Our Roles: The ESL Professional in a Changing World”

by Nancy Clair, Ed.D.



Nancy Clair

Tom Griffith

The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.” Thus did Dr. Clair summarize her wide-ranging, fact-filled, and impassioned effort to define the ESL profession. We teachers tend to focus on the parts: Is the photocopier working today? Will enrollment be enough next term to keep me employed? Nancy Clair urged us to raise our sights to the whole: How do our daily woes and triumphs relate to the big picture, to the tectonic shifts in education, economics, and politics that underlie the field of ESL?

To illustrate, she showed a chart of “The Context of Our Work.” At the core was the “classroom” and in concentric circles around it were “school,” “community,” “state,” “nation,” and “world.” She ran through each level insofar as it affected the ESL profession.

Starting from the outermost, she noted how overseas conflicts send streams of refugees to the United States—and into our classes (from Somalia, Cambodia, El Salvador). Likewise, the global shift toward free-market economics has increased movement of labor, increasing in rich countries the population of linguistic minorities (Arabs in France, Filipinos in Japan, Mexicans in the US).

At the national level, those changes have contributed to the conservative trend in politics. Immigration, both legal and illegal, has surged in response to the job market. This has spawned a reaction, seen not only in calls for lower immigration but for English-only laws, an end to bilingual education, and abolition of the Department of Education. Dr. Clair called this response “xenophobic and racist” and faults the Republican Party.

Moving to the state level, she documented how these population shifts have affected Massachusetts dramatically. For example, “Boston went from a minority enrollment of 27% in 1960 to close to 90% in 1990. Over a third of students in Boston, Lawrence, and Holyoke are limited English proficient,” and most worrisome, “Massachusetts has the 3rd highest per capita income in the US; it also has a 16% child poverty rate.” Yet there has been little official attention to these changes. Education news is dominated by plans for reform, achieved through raised and uniform standards that

can be tested. Dr. Clair worried that this thrust will obscure the needs of language minorities or tilt curriculum away from multiculturalism.

All these issues devolve further to the community and school levels. Clair’s challenged the view that local control of education is always a blessing. School boards can reflect harmful trends, making it all the more necessary for ESL teachers to break out of their isolation and become activists.

This was the heart of her message. Having laid out the context in which we teach, she urged us to define ourselves more broadly, and develop six facets of being a true ESL professional.

First, we must know our stuff. There is a knowledge base of linguistics and pedagogy, and no amount of compassion can substitute for understanding the foundation of the field. That foundation, however, must extend beyond language skill to the broader context in which learners learn.

Therefore, second, we must ourselves be life-long learners, and not just by earning degrees and keeping up with literature. We must grow more aware of the circumstances of students’ lives, with the social services on which they depend, and the conditions that affect their academic progress. The key is flexibility—a willingness to look beyond “subject matter” and grow conversant with all the influences shaping our students.

Third, we should become advocates. To be dynamite in the classroom is not enough if the programs in which we teach disappear. She cautioned that advocacy is not glamorous and includes the tedious work of lobbying, letter-writing, organizing parent support, picketing, or joining English Plus.

Fourth, an ESL professional *serves*. She said this resembled advocacy but was less focused on student welfare and more on that of colleagues: for example, volunteering for MATSOL duty or being involved in other professional organizations. Closer to home, it can include mentoring younger teachers or doing all the humble, unpaid, unselfish

Continued on page 9

1997 Conference

Two Poems from the Plenary Address of March 1, 1997:

Martín Espada



“The New Bathroom Policy at English High” – A Reading with Commentary

by Martín Espada

MY NATIVE COSTUME

When you come to visit,
said a teacher
from the suburban school,
don't forget to wear
your native costume.

But I'm a lawyer,
I said.
My native costume
is a pinstriped suit.

You know, the teacher said,
a Puerto Rican costume.

Like a guayabera?
The shirt? I said.
But it's February.

The children want to see
a native costume,
the teacher said.

So I went
to the suburban school,
embroidered guayabera
short sleeved shirt
over a turtleneck,
and said, Look kids,
cultural adaptation.

Bully

Boston, Massachusetts 1987

In the school auditorium,
the Theodore Roosevelt statue
is nostalgic
for the Spanish-American war,
each fist lonely for a saber
or the reins of anguish-eyed horses,
or a podium to clatter with speeches
glorying in the malaria of conquest.

But now the Roosevelt school
is pronounced Hernández.
Puerto Rico has invaded Roosevelt
with its army of Spanish-singing children
in the hallways,
brown children devouring
the stockpiles of the cafeteria,
children painting Taíno ancestors
that leap naked across murals.

Roosevelt is surrounded
by all the faces
he ever shoved in eugenic spite
and cursed as mongrels, skin of one race,
hair and cheekbones of another.

Once Marines tramped
from the newsreel of his imagination;
now children plot to spray graffiti
in parrot-brilliant colors
across the Victorian mustache
and monocle.

Adult Ed Rap Session Report

John Antonellis

A group of about fifteen attended the fifty-minute Adult Ed Rap Session at the Winter/Spring conference. Many came hoping to find ways to address particular teaching issues and to hear about what their colleagues were doing in similar adult education classes. Some time was spent discussing ways in which teachers could support and encourage learner use of English outside of the classroom. Most found the information sharing useful but expressed the desire for additional time in future rap sessions for more in-depth discussions.

Information was provided regarding other state-wide agencies that support adult education, such as SABES and MCAE, and participants were encouraged to get involved by joining MATSOL's Sociopolitical Concerns Interest Group.

A brainstorming activity generated a list of the major issues relevant to adult educators and possible roles MATSOL could play in addressing these concerns. Many of the former focused on dealing with multi-level classes, helping adult learner literacy needs, and finding appropriate assessment tools. Program and employment issues raised included the need for establishing standards of excellence, the implications of funding cuts, and the pros and cons of adult education certification.

The participant-generated list of ways in which MATSOL could better serve the adult education constituency is provided below. For a more complete list of the issues and

concerns raised in the session, contact your new Adult Ed representative, Johan Uvin.

How Can MATSOL Address Adult Educators' Concerns?

- Substantially increase MATSOL's role as an advocate organization; pursue resources to do this professionally.
- Substantially increase MATSOL's role as a leader in charge of standards.
- Substantially increase MATSOL's role as a professional development provider and broker of resources.
- Advocate for more state funds for ABE/ESL.
- Advocate for better employment conditions.
- Provide teacher training for community members, church groups, synagogues, etc.
- Provide more MATSOL materials reviews.
- Provide more hands-on/less theoretical workshops at MATSOL conferences.
- Become a resource able to recommend various tests and other formal/informal assessment tools.
- Take a position on certification of adult educators.

John Antonellis is the out-going Adult Ed representative and currently Coordinator of Workplace Education at Jewish Vocational Service.

Secondary Ed Rap Session

Brenda Sloane

About ten ESL educators, most from the secondary school level, introduced themselves and then defined issues related to their classroom settings about which they were most concerned. These included transition to mainstream classes, mainstream teacher attitudes, limited interaction opportunities, multilevel classes, lack of motivation, and implementation of city-wide standards. As the group discussed these issues, we together attempted to find solutions. Unfortunately, there was hardly enough time to

share the titles of our favorite teaching books, which was to be the second focus of the session. All are therefore invited to attend the Secondary Ed Rap Session at the Fall 1997 conference, where we will continue our discussion and the sharing of our favored texts.

As MATSOL's Secondary Ed Representative, Brenda Sloane led the session and wrote this report.

Swap Shop News

Brenda Sloane

Friday's Swap Shop was held from 11:00-11:30, definitely not ample time to exchange all the exciting and motivating teaching activities (one hour is recommended for the future). However, those present shared ideas such as circle stories,

sticker picture stories, cartoon strips, name histories, one-act plays, the American Sign Language alphabet (to correct spelling mistakes), letters back home, and ESL baseball! Thanks for swapping.

MATSOL Grants

John Antonellis and Carol Piñeiro

After having reached a position of greater fiscal security, the MATSOL board polled members at the Fall '96 conference at Clark University to help determine ways in which our funds should be spent. Members indicated a clear preference for more Professional Development Opportunities. Teacher Research Grants, political action alerts, and ESL Awareness Day also received strong responses, and a number of new suggestions were also received.

Based on this input and board discussions, the MATSOL board decided to reinstate Teacher Research and Travel Grants, which were suspended in 1995, and also to add a new award category in which members interested in sharing their expertise may be funded to deliver Professional Development Opportunity Workshops (PDO's).

A MATSOL Grant Committee was established, and information and application forms were distributed at the Spring Conference. For 1997 awards, applications were accepted through April 1st. The award recipients chosen by the committee are the following:

- Travel Grants of \$300: Angela Atwell, Mass General Hospital; Amelia Onorato, CELOP/Boston University; and Ruth Weinstein, Brighton High School, all for attending the TESOL Conference in Orlando, FL.
- Research Grants of \$500: Jean Chandler, New England Conservatory, for research in the area of vocabulary acquisition; and Veronica Gouvea, Roxbury Community College, for research in the area of content-based courses.

- PDO Grants of \$500: John deSzendeffy of CELOP for a workshop on Multimedia at Boston University; and Kathryn Riley of the Mass. Dept. of Education for a workshop on ESL Standards at Salem State College.

The MATSOL Board would like to extend special thanks to the Grant Committee members Laura Bergan, Anne Consoletti, Jeff DiIuglio, Sterling Giles, Stephanie Goldstein, Fiona Ritchie, and Susan Vik, Chair, for their timely input during this process.

Because not all the grant money allocated was awarded due to the low number of applications received, the board voted at their April meeting to award Travel Grants to Zeida Luisa Santos Betancourt from the National Center for Advanced Studies, Havana, Cuba to attend the MATSOL Fall Conference, and Beatrice Mikulecky, MATSOL Vice President, to give a presentation at a Teacher Training Seminar in August in Bratislava, Slovakia, sponsored by MATSOL's partner affiliate, SAUA/SATE.

The 1998 Grants applications will be distributed at the Fall Conference and printed in the post-conference issue of the *Currents*. We urge more MATSOL members to apply in order to further professional development in the field of ESL.

John Antonellis is the out-going Adult Ed representative and currently Coordinator of Workplace Education at Jewish Vocational Service. Carol Piñeiro is out-going President and, consequently, incoming Past President.

Carolyn Graham and Her Future Plans with SAUA/SATE

Gabriela Dornakova

This report is adapted from No. 3, Vol. 5 of the SAUA/SATE Newsletter, received in early 1997. SATE stands for the Slovak Association of Teachers of English, MATSOL's sister organization. (SAUA is the Slovak acronym meaning the same thing.) This article mentions SATE's national conference, held in the fall of 1996. Some Slovak words and names unfortunately lack certain pronunciation marks. [The Editor]

Carolyn Graham came to Slovakia not only to be one of the main speakers of our conference, but also to present her project to institutions to help her realize it.

After the conference was over, Ms. Graham stayed for five more days in Bratislava [Slovakia's capital] and carefully explained her intention to use Slovak folktales and write a book of *Jazz Chants* based on them. What makes her project so special is that she decided to use not only Slovak

folk tales, but also Slovak folk music and Slovak art to create a book. The only thing she will bring into it is the English language. In spite of the fact that she is writing for OUP, she decided to cooperate with a Slovak publisher. She met the Director of the Slovak Pedagogical Press, Ing. Martinka, who found her attitude to the project attractive and acceptable.

During her stay in Bratislava, Ms. Graham personally met teachers from one of SATE's Special Interest Groups called Young Learners and prepared a demonstration workshop with a group of ten-year-old children.

Ms. Graham left Slovakia with many Slovak folk tales in her suitcase. She was deeply impressed by the enthusiasm of Slovak teachers and promised to return in May/June during a business trip to Italy. We will keep you informed on how the project is going on.

Ms. Dornakova is SATE's Vice President.

A Word of Encouragement for Tired ESL Teachers

Amelia Onorato

MATSOL Travel Grant Recipient

It's no secret that ESL teachers often feel over-worked and under-appreciated. You may feel that you don't have the energy to attend a conference—much less present at one.

Until recently, I had not thought of myself as being particularly ambitious or energetic about doing extra professional activities. A year ago, I would not have imagined myself attending my first TESOL convention. Not only did I go, but I gave a successful presentation, "Getting the Most out of Short Video Clips," with my coworker Dorothy Lynde. Since I know that there are many tired or timid would-be presenters reading this, I would like to offer a few words of encouragement:

- **Have faith in your ideas.** As experienced teachers, neither Dorothy nor I imagined that the techniques we used every day might be new and interesting to others. We were amazed by the high attendance at our presentation—and even more amazed afterwards when participants told us how much they enjoyed it. Many of the other presenters we saw at TESOL were people who had one good idea that they thought was worth sharing.
- **Get support from coworkers.** I might never have started this project if coworkers hadn't encouraged me, and I don't think it would have turned out as well as it did if they hadn't offered practical advice along the way.

- **Learn the joys of collaboration.** Rather than feeling overwhelmed by the project, I was surprised at how easy and fun it was to work with a partner. The workload was cut in half and the creative energy doubled.

- **Don't be discouraged by lack of resources.** At the time I began this project, I didn't know if I would receive any funding. In the end, I was fortunate that one of my employers, CELOP at Boston University, was able to reimburse me for part of my expenses. The Travel Grant I received from MATSOL took care of the rest.

- **Get the maximum return for your efforts.** Dorothy and I chose a project related to classes we were teaching. We tested our work on our students and then practiced our presentation at the Winter/Spring MATSOL conference, held just before the TESOL conference. We are now working on follow-up presentations and articles.

So you see that once you get started, it's hard to stop. I would like to leave you with the thought that doing extra professional work need not be an extra burden. It can be fun and exciting and open up a whole new world of opportunities. Finally, of course, I would like to thank MATSOL for the Travel Grant.

An Enriching and Affirming Experience

Ruth Weinstein

MATSOL Travel Grant Recipient

Atending and presenting at TESOL '97 in Orlando, Florida, was a most affirming, enriching, and engaging experience for me. The conference book, though it resembles the Suburban West telephone directory, is only an antecedent to the conference experience. The TESOL aura permeated the environment even before I reached the hotel registration desk: "ESL talk" filled the shuttle van from the airport to the hotel. Approximately 11,000 professionals involved in every aspect of ESL attended this conference from literally all over the world.

As a high school teacher, I often feel isolated in my day-to-day work. Attending the TESOL conference not only affirmed that I am on track and knowledgeable but it also afforded wonderful opportunities to exchange ideas in formal and informal environments, learn about the trends in the

field, meet the authors whose books are quoted, ask questions, look, listen, and reflect with others in our profession.

I presented a poster session on "The College Application Process for ESL Students," a process which is challenging even for the native-born. I also facilitated a 7:30 A.M. discussion for the Secondary Education Interest Section on "Practical Classroom Activities, Sources, Resources, Samples, and Examples," which I developed at a MATSOL conference. I demonstrated all those little tricks which I've developed over the years. For example, I cut a "blue book" in half and use it as a journal. Those "ESL I" or II students feel great when they write a page. Also, I have students make their own flash cards; a participant suggested keeping them together on a key ring.

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“The ESL Professional in a Changing World” *Continued from page 4*

things that make a workplace successful.

Similarly, and fifth, we collaborate. This extends our attention to community groups with *simpatico* aims. She cited an effort in Lowell to better coordinate ESL, mainstream, and bilingual education. All parties were concerned with the welfare of immigrants, but all had to bend in order to reach a compromise.

Last, we must model professional behavior. In this regard, actions speak louder than words. In our dealings with students, colleagues, parents, or superiors, we simply should hold ourselves to a high standard of conduct. This goes beyond manners, to a sincere taking of responsibility for our school's success. Don't count the minutes to quitting time when you can resume your "real" life. Be professional in the highest

sense, and involve yourself in curriculum improvement.

Knowing what a lofty ideal she was invoking, Dr. Clair concluded by assuring us she was not expecting ESL professionals to be superheroes. She likened ours to the equally vital and frustrating business of being a good parent. It's hard to define; its requirements change constantly; it means wearing many different hats. Yet if pursued seriously, both roles will yield a rich reward—not monetary, but the satisfaction of soul in doing a job well that is far more valuable.

Tom Griffith teaches at Showa Boston and will become Editor of MATSOL Currents this summer.

An Enriching and Affirming Experience *Continued from page 8*

I encourage all our elementary and secondary members to showcase a teaching unit at a MATSOL session as practice for one at TESOL. Contact TESOL at (703) 836-0774 for a proposal form.

At TESOL we work together and build on each other's work. I thank Carol Piñeiro, Past President of MATSOL, who planted the seed and thought me worthy of applying for a MATSOL Travel Grant.

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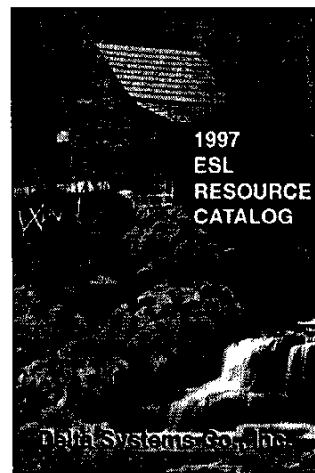
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MECCA Revival

Bette Steinmuller

Last October, at the MATSOL Fall Conference at Clark University, the round table on "The ESL Community College Student in Higher Education" was very well attended by ESL educators and chairpersons from the community colleges, counselors from a high school and community college, the ESL coordinator from UMass, and an ESL representative from Houghton Mifflin. We talked about such issues as content-based ESL, specific instructional needs, transitioning to advanced content areas, mainstreaming, transferring to four-year schools, support services, academic credit for ESL, and the possibility of standardizing community college curricula. The exchange was fruitful, and since everyone wanted to continue sharing information, the natural outcome was to revive MECCA, the Massachusetts ESL Community College Association, which had once been a unique forum for documenting and exchanging information.

MECCA began in 1982 with Kathy Riley calling several ESL chairpersons, who decided to get together to find out what was happening on other campuses. They started sharing information on issues that were of mutual concern. MECCA met twice a semester and stayed in close contact with the Higher Education Coordinating Committee (HECC) during the early years. Allan Hislop, the ESL Chair at Northern Essex, compiled a comprehensive report and survey prepared by a dozen ESL community college chairpersons. Among many other things, the report recommended that foreign language credit be granted for ESL study; the ratio of full-time ESL personnel to part-time be improved; support services, including recruitment and retention, be institutionalized on each campus; in the process of internationalizing the curriculum throughout our college system, ESL staff should be utilized as resources because of their expertise in foreign languages, foreign cultures, and in cross-cultural issues; and that MECCA continue to serve as a research resource for the Board of Regents in the development of policy regarding ESL and international education.

One of the original MECCA members, Juanita Brunelle from Massasoit Community College, stated recently, "It has been very helpful to every program to network and know how we each run, how we are funded and staffed, and how we give out credits. By organizing, we have made progress in legitimizing our programs and getting them into the main-

stream. It is empowering for us to have this organization." Allan Hislop added, "It is important to know what people are thinking and doing at other schools. It is useful to have a policy statement from peers who know the field when talking to administrators." Allan will be updating the 1993 ESL Community College Survey this year, so be on the lookout for a form he will send out in the fall. We should have the results a year from now.

The October conference round-table attendees decided on a follow-up meeting, which took place on January 24 at Holyoke. It too was well attended by people from eight community colleges. The discussion focused mainly on testing, with a lot of interest in how and why some of us had entrance and exit exams at different ESL levels. Dianne Ruggiero, from Middlesex, volunteered to send out a short questionnaire on recruitment, graduation credit for ESL, and assessment and placement. We agreed to meet again at the MATSOL Spring Conference, and it is safe to say that MECCA was officially revived at Lantana! Elaine Dow from Quinsigamond volunteered to be the MECCA secretary. We discussed some of the issues on the questionnaire. For example, Mass Bay's ESL recruitment is handled with a luncheon for area service providers in order to inform them of their ESL program. They also have a brochure which they give out to advertise classes. Massasoit holds an "orientation" class, and they go to adult learning centers and area service providers to let clients know of their program. At Roxbury, there is also an ESL brochure, the regular college recruiter recruits for ESL, and full-time faculty have also volunteered to visit local adult education programs and college fairs. Quinsigamond has an ESL program recruiter. We also talked about whether or not 4-year colleges accept ESL credits, and found out that some do as an elective for language credit.

There was consensus that MECCA would aim for four meetings per academic year, one at each MATSOL conference and another during each of the fall and spring semesters. One such meeting was held at Middlesex Community College in Lowell on Friday, May 16. Hope to see you at the next meeting at the Fall 1997 MATSOL conference. Bravo for MECCA's revival!

Bette Steinmuller is MATSOL's Higher Ed Rep.

1997-1998

Directory of ESL Programs

The new directory will be mailed to all members soon.

Correction

In the biographical information following his Teacher Research article in the Fall/Winter 1996 issue (Vol. 23, No. 1), Paul Abraham was erroneously referred to as "Peter Abraham." Our apologies to Mr. Abraham.

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Broken English *Continued from page 1*

was an immigrant to the grave.

In her later years, when she'd say, "he spoke broken," she meant that he *was* broken. She'd smile slightly, just enough to let me know what "broken" meant.

But my grandmother was as proud of her Italian dialect as she was contemptuous of immigrant speech. "It's our dialect," she'd say when I'd question her about her pronunciation of Italian words. "It's *our* dialect, not yours, not for anyone to question" was the unspoken remark. She used Italian as a code among her friends and her sisters when she wanted to exclude kids and outsiders from parts of conversations. She used it as a weapon against "Americans" when a harsh thought bubbled to the lips but when common courtesy prohibited its verbalization in English. It strengthened her vague sense of who she was and kept her circle tight, exclusive, and safe.

But she'd always ask me to correct her English, on the sly.

"Mom said not to correct adults," I'd weasel.

"She don't have to know."

"Doesn't. She *doesn't* have to know."

"Then promise me you will."

I did, on the sly. We had a pact: I'd correct her, and she'd protect me. She took me by the hand on my first outing into the swamplands of language and power.

But "broken English" in the 90's? My innocent informant had given me the news about my student in a low voice

that echoed assumptions I thought had died long ago. "Your student is fragmented," she seemed to say. "She has broken thoughts, but don't run away, maybe you can help her glue the pieces together, and she'll sound like us."

I can't hold this woman hostage to her views any more than I could have changed my grandmother's sense of brokenness. What could they know about the critical age hypothesis? I will, however, tell the young woman about it when we have a private moment. I'll tell her that an accent has nothing to do with the way a person thinks. I'll have to keep reminding teachers, too, that the English proficiency of parents isn't directly related to the proficiency of their children, as in "...if only the parents would learn to speak English, they could help their children." Or the notion that "first things first" doesn't apply to language acquisition, as when a terrified gym teacher asked why ESL students should come to gym if they didn't understand English:

"Can you think of a better place to learn?"

"Study hall?"

It's our job to keep educating and advocating for our students, just a word here, an insight there, because a little broken English goes a long way.

Marilyn Fontana teaches ESL at Taconic High School in Pittsfield. She has also taught undergraduate ESL courses at Elms College, where she is soon to complete her Masters degree.

Bait and Switch *Continued from page 1*

look forward to seeing you in the fall." The letter stated that Miwako might need to take a few ESL classes but should wait until the opening of school to register.

You may guess that upon arriving Miwako would be in for a different kind of education. While still jet-lagged, she was given a placement test and afterwards assigned to take twelve credits of ESL. At "late" registration she found all the introductory hotel courses had been closed, leaving her with such choices as calculus and astronomy, which wouldn't count towards her degree requirements. She had expected some culture shock but these proceedings insulted her consumer sense as well.

Each year thousands of students come to ESL programs throughout the United States with similar expectations. The students' values and expectations are just one element in the creation of program dynamics and efficacy. It is essential to examine the expectations of the various program players or "stakeholders" to effectively meet the needs of those involved.

What is a Stakeholder?

A "stakeholder" is an individual or group of individuals who has a vested interest in a program: for example, a degree, money, professional reputation, a job, or ego. A stakeholder's behavior and actions are motivated by a complex set of personal and cultural beliefs and values. In a college ESL program, stakeholders may be admissions personnel, academic deans, program directors, students, parents, mainstream faculty, and ESL faculty. By defining the stakeholders in your own teaching context, you will be empowered to negotiate change as you become aware of the values which color different perceptions of program worth.

Clashing perceptions of program purpose and worth inevitably create nasty educational politics. You have no doubt advocated for your rights as a professional and perhaps for those of your students. However, have you really listened when mainstream faculty have lamented the presence of underprepared non-native speakers in their classrooms? Have you wondered about the pressures placed on admissions

Continued on the next page

Bait and Switch *Continued from prior page*

representatives to meet their recruitment quotas? Do you understand the sacrifices that lower-middle class parents have made in order to fulfill their child's dream of an American college education? It is essential to ask these questions and also be willing to come to terms with the answers as they impact our working and teaching environments. Let's see how these issues played out at Gold Coast College.

Program Description

The ESL Program at Gold Coast College is for matriculated degree students who score lower than 500 on the TOEFL. They wish to begin degree work while concurrently taking courses in ESL yet receive no degree credit for ESL as it is officially a "developmental skills" program. The curriculum is a mix of basic skills and content courses. At late registration, students are assessed via a holistic writing sample and the Michigan Test (a standardized predictor of success for non-native speakers of English in a tertiary setting). Students are then placed in classes according to their test scores, an informal interview, and the ESL Director's assessment of their prior academic background.

Students take anywhere from one to twelve credits of ESL per semester, leaving three to seventeen credits available for degree course work. When students have reached a minimum competency level in the various skill areas, they are allowed to enter Freshman English Composition. Out of a total college population of 875 full-time students, there are approximately 35 students enrolled in ESL courses.

Students and Parents As Stakeholders

These students are primary stakeholders—and their parents, by virtue of the financial support of their children, secondary stakeholders. They value time, money, and the status of an American college degree. The acceptance letter which they receive does not outline the ESL Program curriculum or placement procedures nor give students a time-line on expected graduation. They are thereby uninformed consumers.

The vast majority of these students are from Japan, where educational outcomes follow a discrete linear process. With the addition of up to twelve credits of ESL per semester, the time required to complete degree requirements becomes ambiguous. Although many of the students are from very wealthy homes, just as many come from middle-class families, who have saved money from part-time jobs or taken bank loans or second mortgages to finance the yearly tuition of \$18,000.

Admissions

Admissions serves as the omnipotent gatekeeper. Conditional admission of students with low TOEFL scores is a solution to the inadequate supply of qualified applicants to degree programs. These students are accepted into degree programs, *not* an English language program, and are counted

by the institution as matriculated degree students. The financial benefit to the college is significant, as these conditional acceptances bring in nearly half a million dollars per year.

The ESL program is not officially marketed because of contractual agreements with private language institutes which refer students to Gold Coast. Admissions officially states that Gold Coast College does not have an ESL program, only support courses. Yet Gold Coast pays a full-time ESL Program Director, who designs program curriculum, hires part-time program staff, and serves program participants. This contradiction signifies institutional denial of the ESL program.

Director of ESL

The Director of ESL is a lightning rod for discontent from all other stakeholders. The Director is viewed as teacher and agent of the college by the students and as "foreigner expert" or "foreign student problem-solver" by faculty. By Admissions he is seen as "the pesky student advocate." By part-time ESL faculty, he is viewed as sympathetic yet suspect, because he is the only ESL professional with a full-time job. From the students' initial perspective, the Director is an obstacle to their progress, for he is the first official person whom they encounter outlining what may be required for graduation.

Mainstream Faculty

Many faculty members, particularly those who teach introductory courses, have daily interface with students enrolled in the ESL program. The classroom experience can be quite different, depending upon a variety of factors: the subject taught, the number of non-native speakers enrolled in a particular course, faculty empathy for non-native speakers, and a particular student's linguistic and cultural proficiency. Many faculty members admire the efforts put forth and appreciate the diverse perspective that these students bring to the learning environment. Conversely, there are those who are hostile to the presence of non-native speakers, viewing them as a sign of lowered academic standards and as the element responsible for "driving the mainstream students out of their programs."

A Culture of Blame

When reality does not live up to a stakeholder's expectations, there is a tendency to place blame somewhere. At Gold Coast, the students are blamed for their inability to master the language in six months, leaving them feeling further alienated and spurring the desire to transfer. Faculty members may be blamed for being insensitive or having a different set of standards for native speakers and non-native speakers. The ESL program itself may be viewed as irrelevant to the demands of the greater institution. The scenarios are seemingly endless. This blame-placing leads to further alienating of stakeholders from each other, breaking down effective

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New Ways of Using Drama and Literature in Language Teaching

Valerie Whiteson, Editor

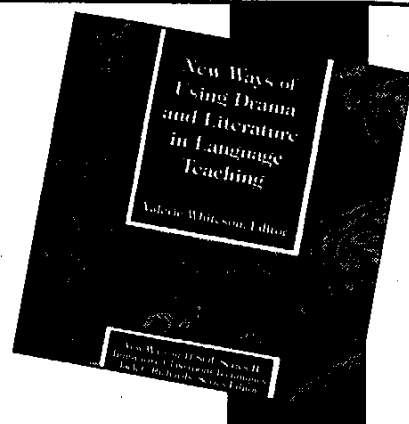
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From the President *Continued from page 2*

receiving the last of the proposals and getting out the preliminary conference schedule was only a matter of a few short days, there was little time for proofreading. I was therefore horrified to see one presentation, "Short Cuts, An Interactive Approach," listed as "Short Cuts, An *Inactive* Approach." Sterling Giles' response: "Amusing, but not OK."

Throughout this upcoming year, we plan to continue providing the same quality and breadth of services. In addition, we are reinstating Travel and Research Grants and inaugurating grants for organizers/presenters of PDO's. After negotiating with Northern New England TESOL and ConnTESOL, we are anxious to share in the production of a regional conference with these other two New England affiliates. Also, we have been communicating with our sister organization in Slovakia, SATE (the Slovak Association of Teachers of English), with the expectation of both informational and personal exchanges.

Despite the solidity within our state organization, the bad news relates to growing anti-immigrant sentiment and subsequent legislation. The government at every level is assaulting our student populations. For example, the Department of Education is considering new Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) regulations, the thrust of which is to give districts the option of eliminating bilingual staffs and support. It seems apparent that the governor and Board of

Education are moving towards the limitation or elimination of bilingual education in Massachusetts.

On the national level, the Immigration Bill H.R. 3610/P.L. 104-208 restricts the flow of international students to our communities. This, of course, will affect the numbers in our schools and, more importantly, the diversity in our mainstream classes. In addition, an immigration law adopted last fall provides an income standard which will make it much more difficult for poor and working-class immigrants to bring family members to the United States. As a result, thousands of U.S. citizens and lawful, permanent residents will not be able to reunite with their spouses, children, and other family members. Since immigrant numbers cannot be reduced directly, legislators are trying to reduce immigration through these backdoor methods. The anti-immigrant backlash is an issue we must all rally against if we are to serve effectively our students and the larger immigrant community.

As president, it is my hope that MATSOL will continue its high level of member service, provide growth for individuals through grants, and enhance collaboration with regional affiliates and Slovakia. In addition, we need to work towards stronger advocacy for ourselves as professionals, and for the beleaguered populations whom we serve.

Linda Schulman

Bait and Switch *Continued from page 13*

negotiation and taking the focus away from service delivery.

Conclusions

As long as a need for full-paying students exists and the pool of available applicants provides a plethora of potentially full-paying students with inadequate TOEFL scores, the ESL program at Gold Coast College will continue to exist. But plausible solutions to this particular institutional dysfunction are apparent. Marketing clear expectations to students and parents is certainly a beginning. Providing international students and their parents with the knowledge to ask pointed questions before accepting an offer of admission is another.

The dysfunctional situation at "Gold Coast College" demonstrates the potential harm of withholding information from any or all stakeholders. Conversely, it also demonstrates the potential value of holding open and on-going discussions with all stakeholders. Such a forum may reduce the level of alienation between parties and diffuse the negativity that leads to program dysfunction.

Recommended for Further Reading

- Lynch, B. (1996). *Language Program Evaluation: Theory and Practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Madaus, G. F., Scriven, M. & Stufflebeam, D. (1996). *Evaluation Models: Viewpoints on Educational and Human Services Evaluation*. Boston: Kluwer-Niwoff Publishing.
- Sanders, J. R. (1994). *The Program Evaluation Standards: How to Assess Evaluations of Educational Programs* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Susan Henderson-Conlon, MAT in TESOL (The School for International Training) is pursuing graduate studies in Educational Research, Measurement and Evaluation at Boston College's Graduate School of Education. She is a freelance researcher and evaluation consultant who has directed intensive English and academic English programs in the college and refugee educational settings.

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Teachers as Emerging Researchers: Through Peer Support



Jean Chandler

Until recently, with a few notable exceptions, teachers have taught and researchers have conducted research. Now, there are signs that the situation is changing. Conducting classroom research has become an important means of teacher development. However, since many teachers have little experience with research, various approaches are needed to help them become competent in, and comfortable with, this mode of practical inquiry. One such approach is ensuring that teachers are regularly informed of teacher research issues, methods, and, of course, results. The growing interest among Massachusetts teachers in conducting classroom research was the reason for the birth of this column, for example. Two other approaches are (1) offering courses in teacher research at institutions of higher education and (2) establishing peer support groups. In this column in the previous issue of *MATSOL Currents*

(Vol. 23, No. 1, Fall/Winter 1996), a course in teacher research at Simmons College was described by its teacher, Paul Abraham. In this issue the second approach is examined: Jean Chandler, a founding member of the *MATSOL Teacher Research Group* and editor of this column, will discuss the history, functioning of, and member response to that peer support group. [Jean Chandler and Ron Clark]

The spark plug responsible for starting a *MATSOL*-based teacher research support group was Kathy Riley. Then president of *MATSOL*, she had urged the organization to present annually two small monetary awards to the best proposals for teacher research—grants which subsequently began in 1990. Also at her behest, five years ago, *MATSOL* sent out a questionnaire to its (then) approximately 500 members ask-

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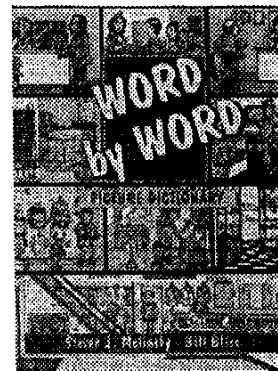
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Peer Support *Continued from page 16*

ing about their interest in teacher research and in starting a support group. Thirty-six people responded and were put on a mailing list.

At the first meetings we discussed what form the group might take and made a schedule of monthly meetings starting the following September (1993) on Saturday mornings, each at a different institution. Since the members of the group had a range of research backgrounds, we decided that the first three meetings that fall would consist of presentations on how to conduct teacher research. The first topic, discussed by the ten teachers present, was how to get started in research, i.e., finding a question.

The October meeting was on data collection, including both qualitative and quantitative methods. Six teachers attended, including two who had not been to the previous meeting. I gave a presentation on how to do interviews and use questionnaires. (See this column, Winter/Spring 1995, Vol. 21, No. 2.) Jane Tchaicha discussed using video and audio tapes for data collection, illustrating her talk by showing a video she had made. (See this column, Summer 1996,

Vol. 22, No. 3).

At our third meeting we decided to adopt an unstructured format whereby each participant could bring questions or issues to the group. We continued to meet in that format for the rest of that year and all of the following school year.

That spring of 1994, four of us made ten-minute presentations at the MATSOL conference about some aspect of our research, often including a plug about the support group. We have sponsored such teacher research forums at all of the subsequent MATSOL conferences, sometimes making the presentations ourselves and sometimes asking others to participate.

We had been publicizing our meetings in MATSOL *Currents*, of course, but, in addition, this column on teacher research was introduced in the Fall 1994 issue (Vol. 21, No. 1), making feature-length articles on teacher research possible. I wrote the first two, but Rick Lizotte, another member, contributed the following year (see Vol. 22, No. 1, Fall/Winter, 1995-1996), and in the spring of 1996 the column contained a summary of a discussion we had had in the group

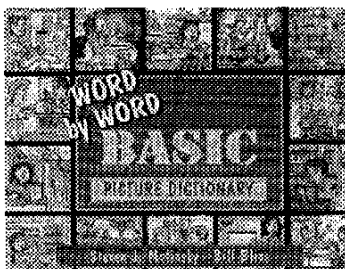
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MATSOL *Currents*

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Please follow the guidelines below in preparing your submission:

Full-length articles

Articles should present new ideas or information related to the topics listed above. Please contact the editor beforehand if you expect your submission to exceed approximately 1250 words in length, which is the general guideline.

Columns

Foreign Correspondence

This column features accounts of EFL teaching experiences. Geographical, sociopolitical, or cultural information often provides helpful background, but the primary focus of the article should be on aspects of teaching and learning English. Submissions should be about 750–1,000 words in length.

Program Spotlight

Submissions should describe innovative programs that are successful in meeting defined needs. 750–1,000 words in length.

Reviews

Reviews should be between 500 and 750 words and should evaluate recently-published ESL classroom materials or professional resources. Submissions should be sent to Sterling Giles, Reviews Editor, 62 Chandler Street, Boston, MA 02116.

Teacher Research

Contributions (of about 1,000 words) should describe any aspect of teacher research or provide summaries of completed projects or studies in progress. Send submissions to Jean Chandler, Teacher Research Editor, 15 Leonard Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139.

Teaching Ideas

For this column submit a step-by-step but brief account of successful classroom techniques; include your rationale, variations, etc. (500–750 words).

Technology Showcase

Intended as a forum for introducing and discussing uses of technology both in the classroom and as a professional resource, this column accepts submissions of between 500–750 words in length.

Letters to the Editor

Readers are encouraged to respond to any article that has appeared in *MATSOL Currents*. Letters should be brief (about 250–350 words).

Guidelines

- Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced with 1" margins on top, bottom, and sides of each page.
- Two copies of the manuscript should be submitted. In addition, if possible, documents should be submitted on a 3.5" computer disk—preferably formatted for Macintosh in Microsoft Word word-processing software. Disks will be returned upon request.
- Photographs, illustrations or other graphics related to the content of the article are welcome. (Black and white photos, line drawings and simple graphics reproduce best.)
- Source citations should conform to MLA or APA guidelines.
- Your full name, affiliation, home address, day and evening phone and fax numbers and, if possible, e-mail address should be included. Please include your own one- or two-sentence biographical note.
- *MATSOL Currents* retains the right to edit all manuscripts that are accepted for publication. A writer's request for final approval is honored whenever possible.

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“Tape Journal Is My Treasure”

Tom Griffith

TIP OF THE TONGUE



Why should you go to MATSOL conventions? Because you might hear some peculiar idea you would never have thought of yourself which, when you try it, revolutionizes your teaching.

Thus it happened to me with audio or “tape journals.” At what convention I heard about them, or from whom, I have no memory. But the seed germinated, and I experimented with them in conversation classes. Now they’re regularly cited in student evaluations as one of the best things we do.

Forgive me if I speak with the zeal of the convert. I was dubious even of written journals til falling under the sway of Vivian Zamel in the UMass grad program. The pedant in me resisted the idea of not correcting every sentence a student produced; else what’s a teacher for? And the claim that writing which was free, abundant, and unstrained would partially *correct itself* seemed crazy. But I tried it, and it was so. Journals uncork students, drawing forth a verbal flow that mysteriously improves in quality, in proportion as they open up and follow their thoughts.

The premise of tape journals is similar. If you learn to write by writing, you learn to speak by speaking. Alas, for many students the latter comes hard. Writing has inherent advantages, in that the communication is private, controlled, and done at leisure, whereas conversation is public, ever-changing in theme, and done under pressure. Many respond to that pressure by clammng up, despite our best tricks.

That’s where the microphone comes in. Before describing how it works, ponder for a moment your own media habits. Do you spend much time listening to radio? Do the names Scott Simon, Ray Suarez, or Nina Totenburg mean anything to you? Massachusetts is great NPR country, and after years of commuting I feel closer to the above folks than I do to some of my relatives. I’m an avid consumer of book tapes for the same reason—the tedium of driving is dispelled by the power of disembodied voices. With no visual stimulus to defray attention, my imagination is engaged more intensely. There’s a specious intimacy to it, as if these gifted people were directing all their talents just at me in my freeway solitude.

So it works with students, especially shy ones. It happens that all my students are young Japanese women. Their educational background has induced strengths such as diligence, orderliness, and preciseness, but drawbacks such as passivity and reluctance to voice opinions. At first teachers may suppose they don’t have opinions, but this is very wrong. Japanese reserve masks an impassioned inner life, probably the more intense for the suppression. So what is stifled in a group surges out with astonishing force in a safe, private outlet like

a journal, written or taped.

I have students do three recordings over a 14-week period. I give them suggested topics and guidelines to encourage spontaneity. Their temptation, of course, is to write out an essay and read it. I fulminate against this, and most get it right by the second round. Ideally, they’ll jot notes on an index card and speak from that, forming sentences as they go.

As with successful written journals, the key is *dialogue*. If they don’t think you’re paying attention and responding seriously, they won’t make much effort; and why should they? But if they do, the thing takes off. You can spur this by going beyond comments on pronunciation and grammar and engaging with their ideas. If they describe their hometown, ask if they want to stay there all their lives. They may not have considered the matter in any language, but they’ll grapple with it and think new thoughts. I always ask a question and require them to ask me one. Occasionally their answers are so developed that they displace the pre-set topics, which is great.

I’m continually shocked at how chatty some students can be, who in class will go months without a voluntary word. They don’t change when I rail against passivity; some don’t even like one-on-one contact outside class, which makes them nervous. But if they can speak in solitude, with the affective buffer of a mike, in expectation of an encouraging response—they’ll talk. And what things they’ll reveal! Secret romances, childhood traumas, fierce complaints with family or culture—often with a request for absolute confidentiality. And they pose some pretty good questions, which open me up too: Why did I become a teacher? Why did I marry my wife?

Again, there’s that specious intimacy. Speaking and hearing in solitude somehow lowers inhibitions, elicits candor, and raises the intensity. At the end of the final round, students often get sentimental, saying how hard it seemed at first but how valuable and enjoyable it became. One put it, “Tape journal is my treasure.”

A warning—it’s labor intensive. You need to stagger the hand-in dates, but they can still stack up if you’re not careful. You wind up repeating yourself a lot. And you’ll have students who blow it off and gain nothing. But a surprising percentage respond well. It’s tailor-made for shy students, a way to impart the confidence that can be applied later in real conversation. Lastly, it’s a means to connect, and if you don’t like connecting personally with students, you probably shouldn’t be in ESL.

Tom Griffith teaches at Showa Boston and becomes editor of MATSOL Currents with the Fall 1997 issue.

LANGUAGE LORE

“Do You Mean Me?”

Bob Saitz



“Hey, you!” “Do you mean me or all of us?” Why is it that while English has different pronoun forms for the first and third person singulars and plurals (he, she, it/they; I/we), there is a gap for the second person? In Old English there was no problem:

	Singular	Plural
Nominative	thu (<i>thou</i>)	ge (<i>ye</i>)
Accusative	the (<i>thee</i>)	eow (<i>you</i>)

What happened? First, as the custom of addressing important, powerful people with a plural form spread throughout Europe (beginning in the Latin of the Roman Empire), *ye* and *you* for the singular became common in English as early

as the fourteenth century. Simultaneously, the *thou* and *thee* became familiar, intimate forms and, of course, nasty insults if used where *ye* and *you* would be socially expected. Inevitably, the higher prestige “y” forms took over for all second-person uses.

At the same time, the language was losing its case distinctions. The distinctions between nominative (indicating “subject” among its functions) and accusative (indicating “object” among its functions) in the noun system had been lost in Old English times. By the seventeenth century this case distinction was being lost in the second-person pronoun as well, and Shakespeare and Milton often interchange the two forms. It seems possible that the loss of the case distinc-

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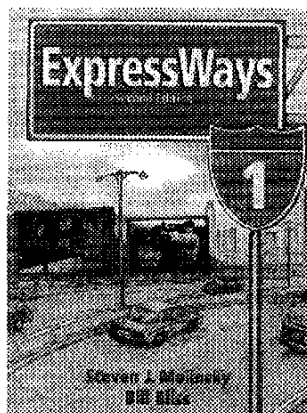


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Notions of Reading Literature in A Chinese Classroom

Raquel Kellermann



As I oversee the final writing exam for my sixty or so students, impressions of them flash through my mind. Each face, so familiar to me now, tells a story. As I pace the floor to check how much they have written and who has crib notes hidden in the drawer-like space under their desks (an ingrained habit, though futile in view of my open-ended assignments to which there is no one right answer and which do not require rote memorization), the 21-year-old American literature students strenuously bear down and write as if in a frenzy. They make me feel like a native teacher: I sense the rush of power Chinese teachers must get from these ostensibly obedient heads, bowed as if in prayer.

Pens dance on desktops, scribbling words about a topic

we have been discussing for weeks: comparing schools in China and the United States. The United States. What do they know about that country? None has ever set foot off of Chinese soil. The students are fond of Hollywood films and believe all Americans live in mansions with huge glass doors. Exaggerated visions (and vices) occupy their mind. None of it does the reality of American life justice. Occasionally, a Westerner arrives to teach them; how much of what he or she says sinks in?

Thus, it has not been easy for me to convince them that they can interpret literature according to their individual ideas and experiences, given that they can justify their claims

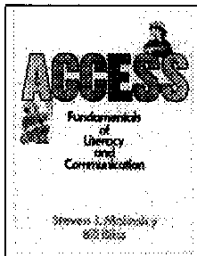
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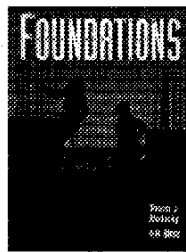
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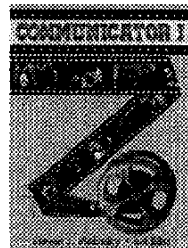
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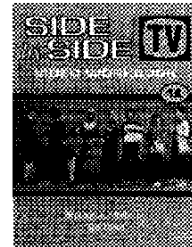
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about the conflict (or lack of it) between teaching and conducting research in our own classrooms (Vol. 22, No. 2).

A year ago this past fall we decided to meet at Bentley College every month. We also started a new format for many of our monthly meetings, in which we spend half our time discussing published research on a designated topic. Topics for last year included second-language writing, gender issues in the ESL classroom, language assessment, and changes in bilingual educational policy. Whoever had read an interesting article on the designated topic brought it to the meeting and told the others about it. That was so successful that we decided to do the same thing a bit more formally at the MATSOL Fall 1996 conference. For ten minutes each, four of us described a favorite research article on second language writing.

Though others sometimes attend, there are six regulars in our group. All six—five female and one male—teach in higher education. When the group started, two of us had just won MATSOL Teacher Research grants, two were working on their dissertations, and one was completing a Masters program in ESL.

As one member of the group more experienced in conducting research, I have tried to think of ways to share my expertise which also benefit my own research. At a meeting last spring, for example, I conducted a holistic rating session on samples of writing by my students. In that way, group members were able to learn how to do holistic ratings of writing, and I obtained ratings of writing quality for a research project I was doing. The year before, I had designed a questionnaire on language learning strategies which I administered to incoming international students at my school. Last year I asked if others wanted to collaborate on this research. Marianne Row and Rick Lizotte accepted, and our subsequent article was recently accepted by *College ESL*. I did this partly to give other group members an opportunity to participate in a quantitative study—to learn how to code

Two members, one less experienced in research and one more so, mentioned feeling empowered because they were taking the initiative with their professional development.

questionnaires, input the data in the computer, and do statistical analyses—and partly to broaden my sample, since my partners were from colleges with ESL populations very different from mine.

The process of writing this article has been another

“Why did you come and why have you stayed in the teacher-research group?”

interesting topic for group discussion. At one meeting I asked members to reflect on their experiences in the group. We each wrote a page or two in response to the questions I had posed: “Why did you come and why have you stayed in the teacher-research group?” and “What have been the frustrations and rewards?” The three with the least background in research said that they had come, and continue to come, to learn how to make use of the rich data they continually encounter in their daily work or to analyze whether the various innovations they are making in their teaching are effective. They were seeking mentors, support, and assistance. The three with more background in research all wrote of wanting to help starters in the field, and one of them, who had won one of the MATSOL awards, of feeling obligated to “give something back.” But they also came to learn about approaches different from the ones they were pursuing, to get feedback, to do collaborative research and presentations, and to get support to maintain both their work and identity as researchers.

The biggest source of frustration, expressed by three members, was that at first it seemed that we were constantly beginning again as new members came into the group. Another member felt it was hard to build a sense of cohesion and continuity because of differing needs. There is a consensus now that the group and its purposes have coalesced and that we have a core group which works well together and has a strong sense of commitment among the members. One colleague wrote, “We have created a comfortable and stimulating environment in which we give opinions and support with a minimum of ego. In fact, the personalities and abilities of the participants are what kept me coming during the frustrating times when I thought the group had not found its purpose.” Another stated, “I was fortunate in that there was a small committed group engaged actively in research and willing to share. The MATSOL Research Group has been a wonderful resource in my present stage of professional growth.” Two members, one less experienced in research and one more so, mentioned feeling empowered because they were taking the initiative with their professional development, rather than just getting ideas and initiatives from professional researchers.

Jean Chandler is International Student Academic Advisor at the New England Conservatory of Music, where she also teaches ESL and psychology courses. This past semester she was also teaching a course in teacher research in the M.A.T. program at Simmons College.

Do You Mean Me? Continued from page 20

tion in the second person, and not in the first or third (I/me, we/us, he/him, she/her, they/them), is at least partially due to matters of pronunciation: Whereas in the other persons the forms for nominative and accusative are clearly different from each other, unstressed pronunciations of the second person forms (and pronouns are usually unstressed) were similar. Why the accusative beat out the nominative is not that clear, but it likely had to do with the greater prominence of the accusative, which occurs with greater stress in the focus part of the sentence.

Although the *thou*, *thee* and *ye* forms survived for a while in some religious and poetic uses, the *you* has won out. However, as users of English we are not too content with having only one form. While the absence of a subject/object formal distinction doesn't make any communicative difference, the absence of a singular/plural distinction does: A cartoon portrays the Smoky the Bear spot in which Smoky the Bear is seen on TV saying, "Only you can prevent forest fires!" Seated in front of the TV is a little boy

with a frightened look on his face saying, "Oh, my God!"

We usually fill this need for two forms by using the *you* for the singular and creating a new form for the plural. Some varieties of English have created *you-all* and *you-uns*. *Youse* was popularized unfortunately in the "gangster speech" of the thirties, "unfortunately," because that rather negative social connotation probably prevented its more widespread use; but it's the most logical solution since "-s" is the normal pluralizer in English. The pidgin and creole languages based on English and developed since the time that *you* was generalized faced the same gap and responded by creating plural forms such as *youfela* (Melanesian), *yupela* (Cape York), *unu* (Jamaica), and *wuna* (Cameroon). Today's inventions in the contemporary standard Englishes include *people*, *you people*, *guys*, and *you guys*.

Interestingly, though usage and grammar books devote considerable space and energy to inconsequential pronoun differences ("It's me/I."), they say almost nothing about the "youses."

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with evidence from the text. Throughout the year, I battled against their notion of reading literature. I repeatedly told them it was OK to form an interpretation different than those of the literary critics', whose books they diligently borrowed from the university library and had lying on their desks during class. Some students relished this unfamiliar way of interpreting literature and came up with creative scenarios. Others resisted the freedom encouraged by their teacher, instead sticking to the "authorized" interpretation, which, printed black on white, seemed to them the only one possible. Surely, their American teacher must be in the wrong.

It is obvious that my students thought the text to be the ultimate authority and their functioned as readers merely to coldly extract information from it. Reading American literature for many of my students functioned as a vocabulary builder. I often discovered that they looked up unfamiliar words, and did not, as I had wanted, highlight important passages and adorn the margins with comments or questions. For them, writing about literature is a way to echo renowned critics (which, from the Western perspective, often leads to plagiarism). To them, neither reading nor writing necessitates creativity or individual perspective. Similarly, school learning is disconnected from personal knowledge and experience. That is why the interactive approach between the text and the reader seems like heresy to them.

All this, despite the fact that I designed the American literature course around class discussions. After presenting them with a short biography of the author and the historical

and sociopolitical background of the time in which the text was written, I focused on the students' actual reading of the text and the ensuing discussion in class.

The textbook didn't help my case. This American literature anthology, edited by Chinese scholars, began with Benjamin Franklin and ended with twentieth-century poetry. I regretted not being able to assign the whole text of, say, Thoreau's *Walden*; we had excerpts only. As often as I could,

I repeatedly told them it was OK to form an interpretation different than the literary critics'.

therefore, I supplemented the textbook with a shorter, complete work by the same author (for example, Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*) only briefly discussing the excerpt. Ironically, the anthology inadvertently gave rise to our first heated class discussion. It happened when I asked them to consider two things: first, the "objectivity" of excerpted texts and second, the decision of the editors to neglect Colonial and Native American literature. My handouts on Native American testimonies and the Puritans' accounts of their journey to America were received by the students with both surprise and concern. If the stories were important, why didn't the editors include them in their anthology?

To spur students' critical thinking, I had them form a discussion circle during which students talked about the

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theme, main idea, and characters of the stories while I sat quietly and wrote down what each student said. (I would later use these notes as the basis of their evaluation.) They generally enjoyed the discussions, partly because speaking seemed less time-consuming than writing an essay. The activity fostered communication in English among the students as they asked each other questions and even debated their points of view, underscoring the idea that there isn't just one correct interpretation but rather a myriad of possibilities—to me, the quintessence of literature.

I realized students were struggling with issues of textual interpretation when Susan, an outspoken student who often voiced her opinion in class, wrote to me in her journal after Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" had been up for class discussion:

In today's American literature class, Miss Kelleman [sic] asks us to discuss the main idea of Young Goodman Brown. Many students say that the main idea of this article is the nature of human beings is evil. After pointing out the major idea, they further their speeches by saying whether they think human beings are born evil or not. In one word, they present their personal point of view. It seems to me when we appreciate an article, we should see it from the author's point of view, not ours. We evaluate an article objectively.

Hawthorne conveys in Young Goodman Brown his idea that the nature of human beings is evil because he holds a negative attitude toward the world, toward the human beings. It's natural that he shows pessimistic viewpoint in the article. I think, we have no right to praise or criticize any writer in terms of his/her philosophy of life. We must focus our attention on the writing technique, the arrangement of the article or even its diction.

I was not surprised to read this. But such a journal entry starts a true dialogue. I was happy that the student had criticized my approach, for it showed that she felt free to express herself. More importantly, she was crossing the boundaries of the way she was taught to behave in class. Not only was she aware of her way of thinking, but she also defended her opinion to her teacher. I couldn't have asked for more.

Through all this, culture, history, and politics come into play. For the most part, individuals' kowtowing to authority and the omnipresent Confucius act as roadblocks to Western-style reading and writing processes. But this does not mean that interactive reading and reflective writing do not exist in China.

I have read many imaginative, inquisitive journals written by my Chinese students. In fact, journal writing is firmly

grounded in Chinese culture, but journals are considered so personal that a writer would rather burn his or hers than have it read by somebody else. Using self-reflective writing in the form of dialogue journals or reading logs as tools for learning is applying them to unfamiliar contexts. Hence, my goal was for classroom journals to connect the writer's personal experiences and ideas to what he or she read. I soon realized that the basis for the kind of reading and writing I encouraged was already there. I had only to find ways to connect their personal writing with writing produced for class.

The course structure created multiple avenues for students to actively make connections between reading assignments and their writing. Students wrote weekly journals with no restrictions on topics, which many of them took as opportunities to make connections between their personal lives, class reading, and the happenings in the classroom. They handed in double-entry journals reflecting their responses to reading assignments. Only slowly did I insert the

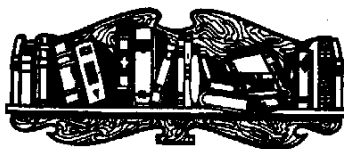
For the most part, individuals' kowtowing to authority and the omnipresent Confucius act as roadblocks to Western-style reading and writing processes.

occasional essay assignment, fearing that they would fall back to their learned habit of producing standard, subject-less essays. Ultimately, my goal was not to convince them that the kind of academic writing I advocated was correct. I simply wanted to open their eyes to another way, another option. I did not dare project whether my methods would work within their educational system, the system they stepped into as soon as they left my class.

Part of teaching is observing students' learning behavior, and the gradual process of uncovering their previous educational experience. Creativity in lesson planning, risk-taking, and learning from mistakes are all prerequisites for teachers who are invested in their students' learning. Teaching is also a constant process of re-evaluating one's goals; being flexible where one can be without violating one's principles, and being rigid where one cannot give in. Learning, by the same token, is a way to constantly evaluate and adjust one's knowledge. The role of teacher and student are at times interchangeable because, as true teachers, we never forget that students are also teaching us.

Raquel Kellermann taught in Changsha, Hunan, People's Republic of China, for one year. She is currently working at Quincy School Community Council in Boston's Chinatown. She can be reached via e-mail at Luo@meol.mass.edu.

REVIEW



Longman Language Activator: The World's First Production Dictionary. Longman, 1993. 1,587 pages. ISBN 0-582-04093-0 Workbook 0-582-10033-X

David Maisel

For the 23,000 most common English words and phrases and those most frequently misused by non-native speakers, here is a merging of dictionary, thesaurus and idiomatic usage guide, designed to enable intermediate and advanced ESL students to choose words for effective use.

Charts and formatting clarify entries' relationships. To reach the word or phrase whose semantics, syntax and pragmatics are appropriate for a student's intended use, the student first looks up the relevant Key Word, the concept that is the semantic core of a family of some twenty entries which come under it. Unlike the conceptual headings of a thesaurus, e.g., *conditionality, mortality, reciprocity*, all of the 1,052 Key Words, the 22,000 other entries, and their definitions in the *Activator* are familiar to an advanced ESL student, e.g., *if, die, each other*. The Key Words are in an alphabetical sequence, as are the other 22,000 entries, each of which refers one to the relevant key word. For example, *transition, conservative, move, have second thoughts, fickle, and adapt* all send a reader to the Key Word *change*.

The authors needed to find out how Britons and Americans actually speak and write and how that language differs from the English of ESL students, so they gathered and analyzed three corpora. One of them, the Longman Lancaster Corpus of 30 million words, is taken from 2,000 mostly British and American books, periodicals, and unpublished materials. Another, Longman's corpus of 10 million spoken words, based on the British National Corpus, is taken from transcripts of spontaneous speech. The third comes from the writing of students learning English in 70 countries.

The corpora's computer patterned the language into the 1,052 Key Word concepts and analyzed the ways native and non-native speakers articulated them, revealing nuances not covered in any earlier dictionary. The Key Words and their extended families include everything that you could imagine anyone ever wanting to say on a non-technical topic, other than words such as concrete nouns whose usage is unproblematic. (Someone who already has communicative appropriateness in English but still needs the word for a cold, dry, strong northerly wind of southern France should buy the *Random House Word Menu* instead.)

Under each Key Word comes a numbered list of brief descriptions; these are the headings of about five subdivisions which follow the list. These subdivisions are differentiated

according to both semantic parameters (degree, manner, instrument, function, time, duration, cause, and result) and pragmatic ones (register, perspective, emphasis, attitude, and relevance).

In each subdivision, about five entries (relatively close relatives in the Key Word's extended family) are grouped together (undefined, in a list under the numbered heading), and after that list each of its entries is defined so as to neatly distinguish it from its alternatives. Each entry is also illustrated in at least one example sentence.

If necessary, information is given on the entry's syntactic frame (e.g., which prepositions and adverbial complements a verb takes) and on its selection restrictions (i.e., the rules specifying—usually by semantic class—which concepts are combinable with a given word), such that if the word is *green* it can't normally modify *behavior*. For each of an entry's usages in a different syntactic frame one or two new example sentences are given.

Here is a merging of dictionary, thesaurus and idiomatic usage guide, designed to enable intermediate and advanced ESL students to choose words for effective use.

The order in which the book lists the different subdivisions, the different entries within a subdivision, and the different usages of an entry was set by the frequency of each one's occurrence in actual speech and writing, as revealed by the corpora. Phrases, instead of being shunted to the bottom, as in a dictionary or thesaurus, often appear here above their single-word alternatives, reflecting the fact that the idiomaticity of phrases often makes them the preferred choice, as with *make (someone) laugh* above *amuse* and *pleased with yourself* above *complacent*.

The Workbook does not teach the vocabulary in the *Activator per se* but is a guide to the method of using the *Activator*. Five hours' instruction or independent use of the Workbook's 58 pages will prepare a student for the eight steps of the book's format that lead to the desirable word and its right form. That's a lot of work, and most students won't go through all eight steps outside of class, even if shown how. So why bother with this book? If you're determined to make your way into the mainstream, willing to work nights, drive in the dark, and study road maps, this is the elite vehicle on which you can rely to get you there safely and in appropriate style.

David Maisel teaches at Roxbury Community College and SCALE (The Somerville Center for Adult Learning Experiences). dmaisel@mecn.mass.edu

REVIEW



David Maisel

Random House Word Menu. Stephen Glazier. Random House, 1992. 977 pages. ISBN 0-679-40030-3.

Partly accessible to advanced and high-intermediate ESL students, this book merges many features of thesaurus, dictionary, reverse dictionary, and almanac. It is richly indexed and, like a big hard disk's directories, is organized hierarchically in 800 notional divisions that descend in a few steps from seven headings. It's useful for brainstorming; remembering a word on the tip of one's tongue; homing in on just the word to make a sentence click; building vocabulary systematically; keeping track of which naval officer's rank is superior to whose; finding a hat, food or holiday for a given nationality or time period; seeking paradigms for subsuming overwhelmingly unlimited chunks of information; and playing word games and inventing them. It sorts 4,000 adjectives describing human personality and behavior under sixteen broad pairs of opposites, such as Moderate/Excessive and Strong/Weak, and defines 200 terms from *accismus* to *spoonerism* to *zeugma* in the Rhetoric and Figures of Speech section.

Golden Movie Retriever. Martin Connors, Julia Furtaw & James Craddock, editors. Visible Ink Press, 1996. 1,608 pages. ISBN 0-7876-0626-X.

In addition to features of rival video guidebooks (blurbs, quality grading, child-protection rating, actor index, classification according to genre), this one has a thousand classification headings under which 22,000 movies are listed, including country produced in, book adapted from, music composer, song title and 581 themes, topics and sub-genres, e.g., Alien Beings—benign, Buddhism, Cannibalism, Cave People, Coming of Age, Dedicated Teachers, Etiquette, Extraordinary Pairings, Frame-ups, Going Native, Growing Older, Hispanic America, Immigration, Kindness of Strangers, Loneliness, The Meaning of Life, Parallel Universes, Physical Problems, Revenge, Saints, Salespeople, Slavery, Subways, Summer Camp, Survival, Tearjerkers, Time Travel, Venice, War-anti, Wilderness, Women in Prison, and Yuppie Nightmares.

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— Reductions —

Eva Ververidis

One day, in pronunciation class, we were studying how unstressed vowels reduce to *schwa*. At that particular time, we were focusing on the vowel *e*. I asked the class to examine words that we had studied in the lesson that day and to tell me which ones contained the vowel *e* reduced to *schwa*. Students responded with words such as "water" and "mathematics" among others. One student, Alejandro, suggested a word such as "fine" as having the *schwa* sound. I responded that the *e* in this word was not reduced, but silent. Alejandro looked at his classmates and then, in one of the wittiest moments of saving face that I have ever seen, turned to me and said, "Yes, it is so reduced that we do not pronounce it at all."

Eva Ververidis teaches at CELOP, Boston University.

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